

An Explanation of Design Permissions

Who Needs to Seek Permission?

If your quilt is a completely original design, not based on anyone else's patterns, photographs, or artwork, you do not need to worry about getting anyone's permission before displaying your quilt. If your quilt is strictly for your own use and enjoyment, and will not be displayed publicly, used commercially, or sold, you also do not have to seek any permissions. However, if you use someone else's pattern, artwork, photography, or even another quilt as the basis, starting point, or full source of your design, it is important that you ask for and receive that person's permission before displaying your quilt publicly. Even though the quilt and the hard work are all yours, the design is the intellectual property of its creator. Your quilt, even if the design has been altered, is considered a derivative work of their original design.

I Paid for My Pattern – That Means I Have the Designer's Permission, Right?

Many people believe that by purchasing a pattern, they are purchasing the right to use the pattern in whatever way they see fit, but this is not the case. Purchasing a pattern (or book, or photo, or magazine) gives you permission to make a quilt from the pattern only for your own use. It does not grant permission to publicly display the quilt or to use it for commercial purposes. To do this, you need to ask the creator for his or her permission. This is not difficult or time consuming, and it is often a very pleasant experience.

What if I Altered the Design to Make it My Own?

Quilters are often inspired by others' work in photography, sculpture, painting, or fabric arts. If the other artist's work is visible and identifiable in your work, even though it might not be exactly the same, you still need to ask their permission. If it is not visible or identifiable, it is still a good idea, and a respectful courtesy, to credit that artist, even if you do not ask permission.

How Do I Ask Permission?

Seeking permission does not have to be intimidating or difficult. In most cases, a simple e-mail or short letter is all that is needed. Contact information is usually available through the book, magazine, or pattern company, and may even be printed in the book, magazine, or on the pattern. Often, designers, photographers, and artists have their own websites with contact information posted. Tell the artist/designer that you have made a quilt from their pattern/artwork, attach a photo, and ask their permission to enter and display it in the show and to publish photographs with proper credit. Depending on where you found the pattern or artwork, you may need to contact the publisher as well. Most of the time, people are happy to hear that a quilt inspired by their work has been accepted into a juried contest or show.

Is it Enough to Have Permission?

Gaining permission is the biggest hurdle in avoiding copyright infringement, but not the only one. It is not enough to just get permission; you have to give proper credit to the designer/artist. That should be done on your contest entry form. Provide the name of the artist/designer, the title and publisher of the book, magazine, or web site if applicable, and any other information that may seem important. You may write on the back, or attach an extra page if necessary.